

古 今 詩 選

CHINESE POETRY
IN ENGLISH VERSE

BY

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*Dear Land of Flowers, forgive me! — that I took
These snatches from thy glittering wealth of song,
And twisted to the uses of a book
Strains that to alien harps can ne'er belong.*

*Thy gems shine purer in their native bed
Concealed, beyond the pry of vulgar eyes;
And there, through labyrinths of language led,
The patient student grasps the glowing prize.*

*Yet many, in their race toward other goals,
May joy to feel, albeit at second-hand,
Some far faint heart-throb of poetic souls
Whose breath makes incense in the Flowery Land.*

H. A. G.

Cambridge: October 1898.

TO A YOUNG GENTLEMAN

Don't come in, sir, please!

Don't break my willow-trees!

Not that *that* would very much grieve me;
But alack-a-day! what would my parents say?

And love you as I may,
I cannot bear to think what that would be.

Don't cross my wall, sir, please!

Don't spoil my mulberry-trees!

Not that *that* would very much grieve me;
But alack-a-day! what would my brothers
say?

And love you as I may,
I cannot bear to think what that would be.

Keep outside, sir, please !

Don't spoil my sandal-trees !

Not that *that* would very much grieve me ;
But alack-a-day ! what the world would say !

And love you as I may,
I cannot bear to think what that would be.

*Odes*¹

TO A MAN

You seemed a guileless youth enough,
Offering for silk your woven stuff; ²
But silk was not required by you:
I was the silk you had in view.
With you I crossed the ford, and while
We wandered on for many a mile
I said, "I do not wish delay,
But friends must fix our wedding-day.....
Oh, do not let my words give pain,
But with the autumn come again."

And then I used to watch and wait
To see you passing through the gate;
And sometimes when I watched in vain,
My tears would flow like falling rain;

But when I saw my darling boy,
I laughed and cried aloud for joy.
The fortune-tellers, you declared,
Had all pronounced us duly paired;
“Then bring a carriage,” I replied,
“And I’ll away to be your bride.”

The mulberry-leaf, not yet undone
By autumn chill, shines in the sun.
O tender dove, I would advise,
Beware the fruit that tempts thy eyes! ³
O maiden fair, not yet a spouse,
List lightly not to lovers’ vows!
A man may do this wrong, and time
Will fling its shadow o’er his crime;
A woman who has lost her name
Is doomed to everlasting shame.

The mulberry-tree upon the ground
Now sheds its yellow leaves around.

Three years have slipped away from me,
Since first I shared your poverty;
And now again, alas the day!
Back through the ford I take my way.
My heart is still unchanged, but you
Have uttered words now proved untrue;
And you have left me to deplore
A love that can be mine no more.

For three long years I was your wife,
And led in truth a toilsome life;
Early to rise and late to bed,
Each day alike passed o'er my head.
I honestly fulfilled my part;
And you, — well, you have broke my heart.
The truth my brothers will not know,
So all the more their gibes will flow.
I grieve in silence and repine
That such a wretched fate is mine.

Ah, hand in hand to face old age! —

Instead, I turn a bitter page.

Oh for the river-banks of yore;

Oh for the much-loved marshy shore;

The hours of girlhood, with my hair

Ungathered, as we lingered there.

The words we spoke, that seemed so true,

I little thought that I should rue;

I little thought the vows we swore

Would some day bind us two no more.

Odes

THE CRICKET

The cricket chirrup in the hall,
The year is dying fast;
Now let us hold high festival
Ere the days and months be past.
Yet push not revels to excess
That our fair fame be marred;
Lest pleasures verge to wickedness
Let each be on his guard.

Odes

THE HUSBANDMAN'S SONG

Work, work, — from the rising sun
Till sunset comes and the day is done
 I plough the sod
 And harrow the clod,
And meat and drink both come to me,
So what care I for the powers that be?

Anon

YAO'S ADVICE

With trembling heart and cautious steps

Walk daily in fear of God.....

Though you never trip over a mountain,

You may often trip over a clod.

Anon

INSCRIPTION ON A WASH-BASIN

Oh, rather than sink in the world's foul tide

I would sink in the bottomless main;

For he who sinks in the world's foul tide

In noisome depths shall for ever abide,

But he who sinks in the bottomless main

May hope to float to the surface again.

Anon

UNPOPULARITY

Among birds the phoenix, among fishes
the leviathan holds the chiefest place;
Cleaving the crimson clouds,
the phoenix soars apace,
With only the blue sky above,
far into the realms of space;
But the grandeur of heaven and earth
is as naught to the hedge-sparrow race.
And the leviathan rises in one ocean
to go to rest in a second,
While the depth of a puddle by a humble
minnow as the depth of the sea is reckoned.
And just as with birds and fishes,
so too it is with man;

Here soars a phoenix,
there swims a leviathan.
Behold the philosopher, full of nervous
thought,
with a fame that never grows dim,
Dwelling complacently alone, — say,
what can the vulgar herd know of him?
Sung Yü, 4th cent. B.C.

NEGLECTED

Green grows the grass upon the bank,
 The willow-shoots are long and lank;
 A lady in a glistening gown
 Opens the casement and looks down.
 The roses on her cheek blush bright,
 Her rounded arm is dazzling white;
 A singing-girl in early life,
 And now a careless roué's wife.....
 Ah, if he does not mind his own,
 He'll find some day the bird has flown!

Mei Shêng, 2nd cent. B.C.

PARTED

The red hibiscus and the reed,
 The fragrant flowers of marsh and mead, —
 All these I gather as I stray,
 As though for one now far away.
 I strive to pierce with straining eyes
 The distance that between us lies.
 Alas that hearts which beat as one
 Should thus be parted and undone!

Mei Shêng

ON THE DEATH OF HIS FATHER

I look up, the curtains are there as of yore;
I look down, and there is the mat on the
floor;
These things I behold, but the man is no
more.

To the infinite azure his spirit has flown,
And I am left friendless, uncared-for, alone,
Of solace bereft, save to weep and to moan.

The deer on the hillside caressingly bleat,
And offer the grass for their young ones
to eat,
While birds of the air to their nestlings
bring meat.

But I a poor orphan must ever remain,
My heart, still so young, overburdened
with pain
For him I shall never set eyes on again.

'Tis a well-worn old saying, which all men
allow,
That grief stamps the deepest of lines on
the brow:
Alas for my hair, it is silvery now!

Alas for my father, cut off in his pride!
Alas that no more I may stand by his side!
Oh where were the gods when that great
hero died?

*Liu Hêng. Died B.C. 157.*⁴

AMARI ALIQUID

The autumn blast drives the white scud in
the sky,
Leaves fade, and wild geese sweeping south
meet the eye;
The scent of late flowers fills the soft air
above,
My heart full of thoughts of the lady I love.
In the river the barges for revel-carouse
Are lined by white waves which break over
their bows;
Their oarsmen keep time to the piping and
drumming.....

Yet joy is as naught
Alloyed by the thought
That youth slips away and that old age
is coming.

*Liu Chê, B.C. 156—87.*⁵

GONE ⁶

The sound of rustling silk is stilled,
 With dust the marble courtyard filled;
 No footfalls echo on the floor,
 Fallen leaves in heaps block up the door....
 For she, my pride, my lovely one is lost,
 And I am left, in hopeless anguish tossed.

Liu Ch'ê

THE AUTUMN FAN.

O fair white silk, fresh from the weaver's
loom,
Clear as the frost, bright as the winter
snow —
See! friendship fashions out of thee a fan,
Round as the round moon shines in heaven
above;
At home, abroad, a close companion thou,
Stirring at every move the grateful gale;
And yet I fear, ah me! that autumn chills,
Cooling the dying summer's torrid rage,
Will see thee laid neglected on the shelf,
All thought of by gone days, like them
by-gone.

*The Lady Pan, 1st cent. B.C.*⁷

CARPE DIEM

Man reaches scarce a hundred, yet his tears
Would fill a lifetime of a thousand years.
When days are short and night's long hours
move slow,

Why not with lamp in search of
pleasure go?

This day alone gives sure enjoyment — this!
Why then await tomorrow's doubtful bliss?
Fools grudge to spend their wealth while
life abides,

And then posterity their thrift derides.
We cannot hope, like Wang Tzŭ-ch'iao ⁸,
to rise

And find a paradise beyond the skies.

Anon, 1st cent. B.C.

THE ELIXIR OF LIFE⁹

Forth from the eastern gate my steeds I
drive,

And lo! a cemetery meets my view;
 Aspens around in wild luxuriance thrive,
 The road is fringed with fir and pine
and yew.

Beneath my feet lie the forgotten dead,
 Wrapped in a twilight of eternal gloom;
 Down by the Yellow Springs¹⁰ their earthy
 bed,

And everlasting silence is their doom.
How fast the lights and shadows come
and go!

Like morning dew our fleeting life has
passed;

Man, a poor traveller on earth below,
 Is gone, while brass and stone can still
 outlast.

Time is inexorable, and in vain
 Against his might the holiest mortal
 strives ;

Can *we* then hope this precious boon to
 gain,

By strange elixirs to prolong our lives?...
 Oh, rather quaff good liquor while we may,
 And dress in silk and satin every day!

Anon, 1st cent. B.C.

A FIRST-BORN

The wanderer reaches home with joy
From absence of a year and more;
His eye seeks a beloved boy —
His wife lies weeping on the floor.

They whisper he is gone. The glooms
Of evening fall; beyond the gate
A lonely grave in outline looms
To greet the sire who came too late.

Forth to the little mound he flings,
Where wild-flowers bloom on every side ...
His bones are in the Yellow Springs,
His flesh like dust is scattered wide.

“O child who never knew thy sire,
 For ever now to be unknown,
 Ere long thy wandering ghost shall tire
 Of flitting friendless and alone.

“O son, man’s greatest earthly boon,
 With thee I bury hopes and fears.”
 He bowed his head in grief and soon
 His breast was wet with rolling tears.

Life’s dread uncertainty he knows,
 But oh for this untimely close!

*K'ung Jung, Died A.D. 208.*¹¹

AN ABSENT HUSBAND

O floating clouds that swim in heaven
above

Bear on your wings these words to him
I love....

Alas, you float along nor heed my pain,
And leave me here to love and long in
vain!

I see other dear ones to their homes
return,

And for his coming shall not I too yearn?
Since my lord left — ah me, unhappy
day! —

My mirror's dust has not been brushed
away;

My heart, like running water, knows no
peace,
But bleeds and bleeds forever without
cease.¹²

Hsü Kan, 2nd and 3rd cent. A. D.

THE BROTHERS

A fine dish of beans had been placed in
the pot
With a view to a good mess of pottage,
all hot.
The beanstalks, aflame, a fierce heat were
begetting,
The beans in the pot were all fuming and
fretting.
Yet the beans and the stalks were not
born to be foes;
Oh why should these hurry to finish off
those?

*Ts'ao Chih, A.D. 192—232*¹³

LOVERS PARTED

In the Kingdom of Yen
 a young gallant resides,
In the Kingdom of Chao
 a fair damsel abides;
No long leagues of wearisome
 road intervene,
But a chain of steep mountains
 is set in between.
Ye clouds, on your broad bosoms
 bear me afar,
The winds for my horses
 made fast to my car!

Ah, jade lies deep hid
 in the bowels of earth;

To the fair epidendrum
 the prairie gives birth;
And the clouds in the sky,
 they come not at call;
And the fickle breeze rises,
 alas, but to fall.
And so I am left
 with my thoughts to repine,
And think of that loved one
 who ne'er can be mine.

Fu Mi. 3rd and 4th cent. A.D.

AFTER PARTING

Thy chariot and horses
 have gone, and I fret
 And long for the lover
 I ne'er can forget.

O wanderer, bound
 in far countries to dwell,
 Would I were thy shadow! —
 I'd follow thee well.

And though clouds and though darkness
 my presence should hide,
 In the bright light of day
 I would stand by thy side!

Fu Mi

TRUE PLEASURES

The bright moon shining overhead,
The stream beneath the breeze's touch,
Are pure and perfect joys indeed, —
But few are they who think them such.

Anon

A RECLUSE

A scholar lives on yonder hill,
 His clothes are rarely whole to view,
 Nine times a month he eats his fill,
 Once in ten years his hat is new.
 A wretched lot! — and yet the while
 He ever wears a sunny smile.

Longing to know what like was he,
 At dawn my steps a path unclosed
 Where dark firs left the passage free
 And on the eaves the white clouds dozed.

But he, as spying my intent,
 Seized his guitar and swept the strings;
 Up flew a crane towards heaven bent,
 And now a startled pheasant springs.....
 Oh, let me rest with thee until
 The winter winds again blow chill!

T'ao Ch'ien, A. D. 365—427

A PRAYER

Ye fluttering birds in plumage gay
 That to and fro direct your flight, —
 The Western Mother's ¹⁴ court by day,
 The far-off mountain-peaks at night, —
 Oh, be my messengers and go
 And bear to her these words of mine:
 I ask for nothing here below
 Save length of years and depth of wine!

T'ao Ch'ien

SIC TRANSIT

A tower a hundred feet erect
Looks round upon the scene which girds;
'Tis here at eve the clouds collect,
At dawn a trysting-place for birds.

Here hills and streams the observer hold,
Or boundless prairie mocks the eyes:
Some famous warriors of old
Made this their bloody battle-prize.

The centuries of time roll on,
And I, a traveller, passing there,
Mark firs and cypresses all gone,
And grave-mounds, high and low, laid
bare.

The ruined tombs uncared-for stand —
 Where do their wandering spirits hide? —
 Oh, glory makes us great and grand,
 And yet it has its seamy side.

Tao Ch'ien

ALONE

What do these halls of jasper mean,
and shining floor,

Where tapestries of satin screen
window and door?

A lady on a lonely seat,
embroidering

Fair flowers which seem to smell as sweet
as buds in spring.

Swallows flit past, a zephyr shakes
the plum-blooms down;

She draws the blind, a goblet takes
her thoughts to drown.

And now she sits in tears, or hums,
nursing her grief

That in her life joy rarely comes
to bring relief.....

Oh for the humble turtle's flight,
my mate and I;
Not the lone crane far out of sight
beyond the sky!

Pao Chao, died A.D. 466

FORGOTTEN

To learn the art of fencing, forth
I wandered, with my master, north.
I saw an ancient battle-plain
Engirt by hills which still remain;
And while I gazed upon the scene,
A wide expanse of sky and green,
I thought how like a summer's day
Each warrior's name has passed away.

Chiang Yen,
A. D. 443—504

ANTICIPATION ¹⁵

If home, with the wild geese of autumn,
 we're going,
Our hearts will be off ere the spring flowers
 are blowing.

Anon, 6th cent. A.D.

ULTIMATE CAUSES

Trees grow, not alike,
 by the mound and the moat;
 Birds sing in the forest
 with varying note;
 Of the fish in the river
 some dive and some float.
 The mountains rise high
 and the waters sink low,
 But the why and the wherefore
 we never can know.

Hsiao Yen
A.D. 464—549

IN ABSENCE

At eve, I stand upon the bank and gaze;

Restless, I know not where my bark may
rest;

I see the forest through the autumn haze;

I see the hills of radiance all divest;

I see the herdsman homing o'er the lea;

I see the huntsman's laden horse

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return . . . .
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Alas, no loved one comes to beckon me! —

I sit and croon the thoughts that in me
burn.

*Wang Chi, 6th and
7th cent. A.D.*

ICHABOD

Near these islands a palace was built by
a prince,
But its music and song have departed long
since;
The hill-mists of morning sweep down on
the halls,
At night the red curtains lie furled on the
walls.
The clouds o'er the water their shadows
still cast,
Things change like the stars: how few
autumns have passed
And yet where is that prince? Where is he?
— No reply,
Save the splash of the stream rolling
ceaselessly by.

REGRETS

My eyes saw not the men of old;
 And now their age away has rolled
 I weep — to think I shall not see
 The heroes of posterity!

Ch'ên Tzŭ-ang,
A. D. 656—698.

AGAINST IDOLS

On Self the Prophet¹⁶ never rests his eye,
His to relieve the doom of humankind;
No fairy palaces beyond the sky,
Rewards to come, are present to his mind.

And I have heard the faith by Buddha taught
Lauded as pure and free from earthly
taint;
Why then these carved and graven idols,
fraught
With gold and silver, gems, and jade,
and paint?

The heavens that roof this earth, mountain
and dale,

All that is great and grand shall pass
away;

And if the art of gods may not prevail,
Shall man's poor handiwork escape decay?

Fools that ye are! In this ignoble light
The true faith fades and passes out of sight.

Ch'ên Tzŭ-ang

THE RETURN

Bowed down with age I seek my native place,
Unchanged my speech, my hair is silvered
now;
My very children do not know my face,
But smiling ask, "O stranger, whence art
thou?"

Ho Chih-chang, born
A. D. 659

A VISION

The dust of the morn had been laid by a
 shower,
And the trees by the bridge were all covered
 with flower,
When a white palfrey passed with a saddle
 of gold,
And a damsel as fair as the fairest of old.

But she veiled so discreetly her charms from
my eyes
That the boy who was with her quite felt
for my sighs;
And although not a light-o'-love reckoned,
I deem,
It was hard that this vision should pass like
a dream.

Sung Chih-wên, died
A. D. 710

BY MOONLIGHT

Over the sea the round moon rises bright,
And floods the horizon with its silver light.
In absence lovers grieve that nights should be,
But all the livelong night I think of thee.
I blow my lamp out to enjoy this rest,
And shake the gathering dewdrop from
my vest.

Alas! I cannot share with thee these beams,
So lay me down to seek thee in my dreams.

Chang Chiu-ling,
A. D. 673—740

WAITING

The sun has sunk behind the western hill,
 And darkness glides across the vale below;
 Between the firs the moon shines cold and
 chill,
 No breezes whisper to the streamlet's flow.
 Belated woodsmen homeward hurry past,
 Birds seek their evening refuge in the tree:
 O my beloved, wilt thou come at last?
 With lute, among the flowers, I wait for
 thee.

Mêng Hao-jan,
A. D. 689—740

IN DREAMLAND

The sun has set behind the western slope,
The eastern moon lies mirrored in the
pool;

With streaming hair my balcony I ope,
And stretch my limbs out to enjoy the
cool.

Loaded with lotus-scent the breeze sweeps by,
Clear dripping drops from tall bamboos
I hear.

I gaze upon my idle lute and sigh:

Alas no sympathetic soul is near!

And so I doze, the while before mine eyes
Dear friends of other days in dream-clad
forms arise.

Mêng Hao-jan

AT ANCHOR

I steer my boat to anchor
 by the mist-clad river eyot,
 And mourn the dying day that brings me
 nearer to my fate.

Across the woodland wild I see
 the sky lean on the trees,
 While close to hand the mirrored moon
 floats on the shining seas.

Mêng Hao-jan

OUT OF OFFICE

For my betters — my office resigned —
I make way,
And seek with the wine-cup to shorten the
day.
You ask for the friends who once thronged
in my hall:
Alas! with my place they have gone, one
and all.

Li Shih-chih, died
A. D. 747

OVERLOOKED

Beneath the bamboo grove, alone,
I seize my lute and sit and croon;
No ear to hear me, save mine own;
No eye to see me, save the moon.

Wang Wei

A. D. 699—759

GOODBYE

We parted at the gorge and cried "Good
cheer!"

The sun was setting as I closed my door;
Methought, the spring will come again next
year,

But he may come no more.

Wang Wei

A RENCONTRE

Sir, from my dear old home you come,
And all its glories you can name;
Oh tell me, — has the winter-plum
Yet blossomed o'er the window-frame?

Wang Wei

GOODBYE TO MÈNG HAO-JAN

Dismounted, o'er wine we had said our last
say;

Then I whisper, "Dear friend, tell me whither
away."

"Alas!" he replied, "I am sick of life's ills
"And I long for repose on the slumbering
hills.

"But oh seek not to pierce where my footsteps
may stray:

"The white clouds will soothe me for ever
and ay."

Wang Wei

HOME LONGINGS

Here a mortal once sailed up to heaven on
a crane,
And the Yellow-Crane Kiosk will for ever
remain ; ¹⁷
But the bird flew away and will come back
no more,
Though the white clouds are there as the
white clouds of yore.

Away to the east lie fair forests of trees,
From the flowers on the west comes a scent-
laden breeze,
Yet my eyes daily turn to their far-away
home,
Beyond the broad River, its waves, and
its foam.

Ts'ui Hao
8th cent. A. D.

TO A FIREFLY ¹⁸

Rain cannot quench thy lantern's light,
Wind makes it shine more brightly bright;
Oh why not fly to heaven afar,
And twinkle near the moon — a star?

Li Po

A. D. 705—762.

NIGHT THOUGHTS

I wake, and moonbeams play around my
bed,
Glittering like hoar-frost to my wondering
eyes;
Up towards the glorious moon I raise my
head,
Then lay me down, — and thoughts of
home arise.

COMPANIONS

The birds have all flown to their roost in
the tree,
The last cloud has just floated lazily by;
But we never tire of each other, not we,
As we sit there together, — the moun-
tains and I.

Li Po

FROM A BELVIDERE

With yellow leaves the hill is strown,
A young wife gazes o'er the scene,
The sky with grey clouds overthrown,
While autumn swoops upon the green.

See, Tartar troops mass on the plain;
Homeward our envoy hurries on;
When will her lord come back again?...
To find her youth and beauty gone!

Li Po

FOR HER HUSBAND

Homeward, at dusk, the clanging rookery
 wings its eager flight;
 Then, chattering on the branches, all
 are pairing for the night.
 Plying her busy loom, a high-born
 dame is sitting near,
 And through the silken window-screen
 their voices strike her ear.
 She stops, and thinks of the absent spouse
 she may never see again;
 And late in the lonely hours of night
 her tears flow down like rain.

Li Po

“THE BEST OF LIFE IS BUT...”

What is life after all but a dream?

And why should such pother be made?
Better far to be tipsy, I deem,
And doze all day long in the shade.

When I wake and look out on the lawn,
I hear midst the flowers a bird sing;
I ask, “Is it evening or dawn?”
The mango-bird whistles, “’Tis spring.”

Overpower’d with the beautiful sight,
Another full goblet I pour,
And would sing till the moon rises bright —
But soon I’m as drunk as before.

Li Po

FAREWELL BY THE RIVER

The breeze blows the willow-scent in from
the dell.

While Phyllis with bumpers would fain
cheer us up;

Dear friends press around me to bid me
farewell:

Goodbye! and goodbye! — and yet just
one more cup....

I whisper, Thou'lt see this great stream
flow away

Ere I cease to love as I love thee today!

 $Li\ P_0$

GONE

At the Yellow-Crane pagoda¹⁹, where we
stopped to bid adieu,
The mists and flowers of April seemed
to wish good speed to you.
At the Emerald Isle, your lessening sail had
vanished from my eye,
And left me with the River, rolling onward
to the sky.

Li Po

NO INSPIRATION

The autumn breeze is blowing,
The autumn moon is glowing,
The falling leaves collect but to disperse.
The parson-crow flies here and there
with ever restless feet;
I think of you and wonder much
when you and I shall meet.....
Alas tonight I cannot pour my feelings
forth in verse!

Li Po

GENERAL HSIEH AN²⁰

I anchor at the Newchew hill,
 The autumn sky serene and still,
 And watch the moon her crescent fill,
 And vainly think on him by whom
 this shore was made renowned.
 Though mine is no ungraceful lay,
 He cannot hear the words I say,
 And I must sail at break of day
 And all this while the maple leaves
 are fluttering to the ground.

Li Po

A SNAP-SHOT

A tortoise I see on a lotus-flower resting:

A bird 'mid the reeds and the rushes is
nesting;

A light skiff propelled by some boatman's
fair daughter,

Whose song dies away o'er the fast-flowing
water.

Li Po

A FAREWELL

Where blue hills cross the northern sky,
Beyond the moat which girds the town,
'Twas there we stopped to say Goodbye!
And one white sail alone dropped down.
Your heart was full of wandering thought;
For me, — my sun had set indeed;
To wave a last adieu we sought,
Voiced for us by each whinnying steed!

Li Po

BOYHOOD FANCIES ²¹

In days gone by the moon appeared
to my still boyish eyes
Some bright jade plate or mirror from
the palace of the skies.
I used to see the Old Man's legs
and Cassias fair as gods can make them,
I saw the White Hare pounding drugs,
and wondered who was there to take them.
Ah, how I watched the eclipsing Toad,
and marked the ravages it made,
And longed for him who slew the suns
and all the angels' fears allayed.
Then when the days of waning came,
and scarce a silver streak remained,
I wept to lose my favourite thus,
and cruel grief my eyelids stained.

Li Po

FROM THE PALACE

Cold dews of night the terrace crown,
And soak my stockings and my gown;
I'll step behind
The crystal blind,
And watch the autumn moon sink down.

Li Po

THE POET

You ask what my soul does away in the sky,
I inwardly smile but I cannot reply;
Like the peach-blossom carried away by the
stream,
I soar to a world of which you cannot dream.

Li Po

TEARS

A fair girl draws the blind aside
And sadly sits with drooping head;
I see her burning tear-drops glide
But know not why those tears are shed.

Li Po

A FAVOURITE ²²

Oh the joy of youth spent in a gold-fretted
hall,
In the Crape-flower Pavilion, the fairest of
all,
My tresses for headdress with gay garlands
girt,
Carnations arranged o'er my jacket and skirt!
Then to wander away in the soft-scented air,
And return by the side of his Majesty's
chair
But the dance and the song will be o'er
by and by,
And we shall dislimn like the rack in the
sky.

IN EXILE ²³

I drink deep draughts of Lan-ling wine
 fragrant with borage made,
The liquid amber mantling up
 in cups of costly jade.
My host insists on making me
 as drunk as any sot,
Until I'm quite oblivious
 of the exile's wretched lot.

Li Po

IN A MIRROR

My whitening hair would make a long long
rope,

Yet could not fathom all my depth of woe;
Though how it comes within a mirror's scope
To sprinkle autumn frosts, I do not know.

Li Po

LAST WORDS ²⁴

An arbour of flowers

and a kettle of wine:

Alas! in the bowers

no companion is mine.

Then the moon sheds her rays

on my goblet and me,

And my shadow betrays

we're a party of three!

Though the moon cannot swallow

her share of the grog,

And my shadow must follow

wherever I jog, —

Yet their friendship I'll borrow

and gaily carouse,

And laugh away sorrow

while spring-time allows.

See the moon, — how she glances
 response to my song;
See my shadow, — it dances
 so lightly along!
While sober I feel,
 you are both my good friends;
When drunken I reel,
 our companionship ends,
But we'll soon have a greeting
 without a goodbye,
At our next merry meeting
 away in the sky.

Li Po

IN ABSENCE

White gleam the gulls across the darkling
 tide,

On the green hills the red flowers seem
 to burn;

Alas! I see another spring has died.....

When will it come — the day of my
 return?

Tu Fu

A. D. 712—770.

WINE

The setting sun shines low upon my door
Ere dusk enwraps the river fringed with
spring ;
Sweet perfumes rise from gardens by the
shore,
And smoke, where crews their boats to
anchor bring.
Now twittering birds are roosting in the
bower,
And flying insects fill the air around...
O wine, who gave to thee thy subtle
power? —
A thousand 'cares in one small goblet
drowned!

Tu Fu

SSŪ-MA HSIANG-JU ²⁵

'Twas here, from sickness sore oppressed,
 He found relief on Wên-chün's breast;
 'Twas here the vulgar tavern lay
 On mountain cloud-capped night and day.
 And still mid flowers and leaves I trace
 Her fluttering robe, her tender face;
 But ah! the phoenix calls in vain,
 Such mate shall not be seen again.

Tu Fu

THE HERMIT

Alone I wandered o'er the hills
 to seek the hermit's den,
 While sounds of chopping rang around
 the forest's leafy glen.
 I passed on ice across the brook
 which had not ceased to freeze,
 As the slanting rays of afternoon
 shot sparkling through the trees.

I found he did not joy to gloat
 o'er fetid wealth by night,
 But far from taint, to watch the deer
 in the golden morning light.....
 My mind was clear at coming;
 but now I've lost my guide,
 And rudderless my little bark
 is drifting with the tide! ²⁶

Tu Fu

SUPERSEDED ²⁷

Alas for the lonely plant that grows
 beside the river bed,
 While the mango-bird screams loud and long
 from the tall tree overhead!
 Full with the freshets of the spring,
 the torrent rushes on;
 The ferry-boat swings idly, for
 the ferryman is gone.

Tu Fu

SOLO CHI SEGUE CIÒ CHE PIACE
È SAGGIO

A petal falls! — the spring begins to fail,
And my heart saddens with the growing
gale.

Come then, ere autumn spoils bestrew the
ground,

Do not forget to pass the wine-cup round.
Kingfishers build where man once laughed
elate,

And now stone dragons guard his graveyard
gate!

Who follows pleasure, he alone is wise;
Why waste our life in deeds of high emprise?

Tu Fu

DUM RES ET AETAS

From the court every eve to the pawnshop
I pass,
To come back from the river the drunkest
of men;
As often as not I'm in debt for my glass; —
Well, few of us live to be threescore
and ten.
The butterfly flutters from flower to flower,
The dragon-fly sips and springs lightly
away,
Each creature is merry its brief little hour,
So let us enjoy our short life while we
may.

Tu Fu

A PICNIC

The sun is setting as we loose the boat,
And lightly o'er the breeze-swept waters
float.

We seek a corner where the bamboo grows,
And fragrant lilies offer cool repose.

Here well-iced draughts of wine the men
prepare,

With lotus shredded fine by fingers fair.....

But now a black cloud gathering in the sky
Warns me to finish off my verse and fly.

Tu Fu

THE PRESSGANG

There, where at eve I sought a bed,
A pressgang came, recruits to hunt;
Over the wall the goodman sped,
And left his wife to bear the brunt.

Ah me! the cruel serjeant's rage!
Ah me! how sadly she anon
Told all her story's mournful page, —
How three sons to the war had gone;

How one had sent a line to say
That two had been in battle slain:
He, from the fight had run away,
But they could ne'er come back again,

She swore 'twas all the family —
 Except a grandson at the breast;
 His mother too was there, but she
 Was all in rags and tatters drest.

The crone with age was troubled sore,
 But for herself she'd not think twice
 To journey to the seat of war
 And help to cook the soldiers' rice.

The night wore on and stopped her talk;
 Then sobs upon my hearing fell.....
 At dawn when I set forth to walk,
 Only the goodman cried Farewell!

Tu Fu

DHYÂNÂ 28

The clear dawn creeps into the convent old,
The rising sun tips its tall trees with gold, —
As, darkly, by a winding path I reach
Dhyâna's hall, hidden midst fir and beech.
Around these hills sweet birds their pleasure
take,
Man's heart as free from shadows as this
lake;
Here worldly sounds are hushed, as by a
spell,
Save for the booming of the altar bell.

IN THE HAREM

It was the time of flowers, the gate was
closed;
Within an arbour's shade fair girls reposed.
But though their hearts were full, they
nothing said,
Fearing the tell-tale parrot overhead.

Chu Ch'ing-yü

OH STAY

We shall meet, I believe you, again;
 Yet to part! — such a beautiful night.....
 Shall friendship and wine ask in vain
 What a head-wind would take as its right?

Ssü-k'ung Shu
8th cent. A.D.

SPRING SORROWS

The willow sprays are yellow fringed,
the grass is gaily green,
Peach-blooms in wild confusion
with the perfumed plum are seen;
The eastern breeze sweeps past me,
yet my sorrows never go,
And the lengthening days of spring to me
mean lengthening days of woe.

Chia Chih

A.D. 718—772

SPRING JOYS

When freshets cease in early spring
and the river dwindles low,
I take my staff and wander
by the banks where wild flowers grow.
I watch the willow-catkins
wildly whirled on every side;
I watch the falling peach-bloom
lightly floating down the tide.

Wei Ying-wu
8th cent. A.D.

REMEMBRANCES

In autumn, when the nights are chill,
I stroll, and croon, and think of thee.
When dropping pine-cones strew the hill,
Say, hast thou waking dreams of me?

Wei Ying-wu

A PROMISE

Sweet flowers were blooming all around
 when your last farewell you said,
 And now the opening buds proclaim
 another year has fled.
 'Tis difficult to prophesy
 beyond the present day,
 And the remedy for trouble
 is to sleep it all away.
 I suffer much in body,
 and I long for the old spot,
 But cannot bring myself in pensioned
 idleness to rot.
 You say that you will visit me,
 that you are coming soon:
 'Twixt now and then how often
 shall I see the full-orbed moon?

Wei Ying-wu

BUDDHISM

A shrine, whose eaves in far-off cloudland
hide:

I mount, and with the sun stand side by
side.

The air is clear; I see wide forests spread
And mist-crowned heights where Kings of
old lie dead.

Scarce o'er my threshold peeps the Southern
Hill;

The Wei shrinks through my window to
a rill.....

O thou Pure Faith, had I but known thy
scope,

The Golden God had long since been my
hope!

Ts'ên Ts'an

8th cent. A.D.

A REASON FAIR

'Tis night: the grape-juice mantles high
 in cups of gold galore;
 We set to drink, — but now the bugle
 sounds to horse once more.
 Oh marvel not if drunken
 we lie strewed about the plain;
 How few of all who seek the fight
 shall e'er come back again!

Wang Han
8th cent. A.D.

LONELY

The evening sun slants o'er the village
street;

My griefs alas! in solitude are borne;
 Along the road no wayfarers I meet, —
 Naught but the autumn breeze across
the corn.

K'eng Wei
8th cent. A.D.

THE WASHERWOMAN'S GRAVE ²⁹

The hero ne'er forgot the meal she gave, —

My tale is of a thousand years ago, —

And every woodsman knows the time-worn

grave,

Though naught remains of dynasties save

the river's ceaseless flow.

With votive flower the traveller is seen,

The while the grief-bird trills his mournful

lays;

Around, the grass of spring grows wildly

green

Where footprints of the "nobleman"

were left in bygone days.

Liu Ch'ang-ch'ing

8th cent. A.D.

AT DAWN

Drive the young orioles away,
Nor let them on the branches play;
Their chirping breaks my slumber through
And keeps me from my dreams of you.

Ka Chia-yün
8th cent. A.D.

NOSTALGIA

'Tis autumn, and I watch the streams
Which towards my dear home flow;
I span the distance in my dreams,
And wake to deeper woe.

I cannot read to ease my care,
But solace seek in wine,
And think of friends all gathered there —
When will that lot be mine?

Chang Wei
8th cent. A.D.

AT THE WARS

See the young wife whose bosom ne'er
 has ached with cruel pain! —
 In gay array she mounts the tower
 when spring comes round again.
 Sudden she sees the willow-trees
 their newest green put on,
 And sighs for her husband far away
 in search of glory gone.

Wang Chang-ling
8th cent. A.D.

A MESSAGE

Onwards tonight my storm-beat course I
steer,
At dawn these mountains will for ever
fade;
Should those I leave behind enquire my
cheer,
Tell them, "an icy heart in vase of jade."

Wang Ch'ang-ling

A GROTTTO

Deep in a darksome grove their Grotto lies,
And deep the thoughts that now within
me rise.
Fronting the door the South Hill looming
near,
The forest mirrored in the river clear,
The bamboo bends beneath last winter's
snow,
The court-yard darkens ere the day sinks
low.
I seem to pass beyond this world of clay,
And sit and listen to the spring-bird's lay.

Tsu Yung
8th cent. A.D.

A RETROSPECT

Oh this day last year what a party were we
Pink cheeks and pink peach-blossoms smiled
 upon me ;
But alas the pink cheeks are now far far
 away,
Though the peach-blossoms smile as they
 smiled on that day.

Ts'ui Hu

8th or 9th cent. A.D.

HOPE

Last eve thou wert a bride,

This morn thy dream is o'er.....

Cast not thy rouge aside,

He may be thine once more.

Ch'üan Tê-yü

A.D. 759—818

THE WOUNDED FALCON

Within a ditch beyond my wall
I saw a falcon headlong fall.
Bedaubed with mud and racked with pain,
It beat its wings to rise, in vain;
While little boys threw tiles and stones,
Eager to break the wretch's bones.

O bird, methinks thy life of late
Hath amply justified this fate!
Thy sole delight to kill and steal,
And then exultingly to wheel,
Now sailing in the clear blue sky,
Now on the wild gale sweeping by,
Scorning thy kind of less degree
As all unfit to mate with thee.

But mark how fortune's wheel goes round;

A pellet lays thee on the ground,
Sore stricken at some vital part, —
And where is then thy pride of heart?

What's this to me? — I could not bear
To see the fallen one lying there.
I begged its life, and from the brook
Water to wash its wounds I took.
Fed it with bits of fish by day,
At night from foxes kept away.
My care I knew would naught avail
For gratitude, that empty tale.
And so this bird would crouch and hide
Till want its stimulus applied;
And I, with no reward to hope,
Allowed its callousness full scope.

Last eve the bird showed signs of rage,
With health renewed, and beat its cage.
Today it forced a passage through,
And took its leave, without adieu.

Good luck hath saved thee, not desert;

Beware, O bird, of further hurt;
 Beware the archer's deadly tools! —
 'Tis hard to escape the shafts of fools —
 Nor e'er forget the chastening ditch
 That found thee poor, and left thee rich. ³⁰

Han Yü

A.D. 768—824

HOURS OF IDLENESS

A little lake of mine I know,
 Where waving weeds and rushes grow,
 And in its depths by day and night
 The water-monsters swarm and fight.
 Ah, how I loved to idle there!
 But now I can no longer bear
 To pass my days in that sweet spot,
 And lost in meditation rot.
 A sense of duty gives me pause,
 Obedient to my Master's³¹ laws;
 Our span of life is all too short
 To waste its hours in empty sport.

Han Yü

IN CAMP

Across the steppes the bitter north winds
roam,
At dawn the Tartar moon shines cold and
bright;
My soul relapses into dreams of home,
Till the loud rappel summons to the fight.

Han Yü

MEDITATIONS

The leaves fall fluttering from the trees,
And now, responsive to the breeze,
Rustling with weird uncanny sound,
Are dancing merrily around.
On my lone hall the dusk has come
And there I sit in silence dumb.
My servant glides into the room
And with a lamp dispels the gloom.
He speaks; I give him no reply.
He proffers food; in vain. Then I
Move to escape his wondering looks
And seek a refuge in my books.
Alas, the men who charm me so
Perished a thousand years ago!
And while I muse o'er human fate

My heart grows less and less elate
"O boy, whose eyes stare from your head,
"Put up those books and get to bed,
"And leave me to the dreary naught
"Of endless, overwhelming thought."

Han Yü

DISCONTENT

To stand upon the river-bank
 and snare the purple fish,
 My net well cast across the stream,
 was all that I could wish.
 Or lie concealed and shoot the geese
 that scream and pass apace,
 And pay my rent and taxes with
 the profits of the chase.
 Then home to peace and happiness,
 with wife and children gay,
 Though clothes be coarse and fare be hard,
 and earned from day to day.
 But now I read and read, scarce knowing
 what 'tis all about,
 And eager to improve my mind
 I wear my body out.

I draw a snake and give it legs,
 to find I've wasted skill,
 And my hair grows daily whiter
 as I hurry towards the hill.³²
 I sit amid the sorrows
 I have brought on my own head,
 And find myself estranged from all,
 among the living dead.
 I seek to drown my consciousness
 in wine, alas! in vain:
 Oblivion passes quickly
 and my griefs begin again.
 Old age comes on and yet withholds
 the summons to depart.....
 So I'll take another bumper
 just to ease my aching heart.

Han Yü

HUMANITY

Oh spare the busy morning fly!

Spare the mosquitos of the night!
 And if their wicked trade they ply
 Let a partition stop their flight.

Their span is brief from birth to death;
 Like you they bite their little day;
 And then, with autumn's earliest breath,
 Like you too they are swept away.

Han Yü

NEAERA'S TANGLES

With flowers on the ground like embroidery
spread,
At twenty, the soft glow of wine in my head,
My white courser's bit-tassels motionless
gleam
While the gold-threaded willow scent sweeps
o'er the stream.
Yet until *she* has smiled all these flowers
yield no ray;
When her tresses fall down, the whole
landscape is gay;
My hand on her sleeve as I gaze in her
eyes,
A kingfisher hairpin³³ will soon be my prize.

Li Ho
qth cent. A.D.

SUMMER DYING

Whence comes the autumn's whistling blast,
 With flocks of wild geese hurrying past?.....
 Alas, when wintry breezes burst,
 The lonely traveller hears them first!

Liu Yü-hsi

A.D. 772—842

THE ODALISQUE

A gaily dressed damsel steps forth from
her bower,
Bewailing the fate that forbids her to roam;
In the courtyard she counts up the buds on
each flower,³⁴
While a dragon-fly flutters and sits on
her comb.
Liu Yü-hsi

DESERTED

Soaked is her kerchief through with tears,
yet slumber will not come;
In the deep dead of night she hears
the song and beat of drum.³⁵

Alas, although his love has gone,
her beauty lingers yet;
Sadly she sits till early dawn,
but never can forget.

Po Chü-i
A.D. 772—846

AT AN OLD PALACE

Deserted now the Imperial bowers
 Save by some few poor lonely flowers.....
 One white-haired dame,
 An Emperor's flame,
 Sits down and tells of bygone hours.

Yüan Chên

A.D. 779—831

A CAST-OFF FAVOURITE

The dewdrops gleam on bright spring flowers
 whose scent is borne along;
 Beneath the moon the palace rings
 with sounds of lute and song.
 It seems that the clepsydra³⁶
 has been filled up with the sea,
 To make the long long night appear
 an endless night to me!

Li I
died A.D. 827

AT A GRAVE

An old man lays to rest a much-loved
son
By day and night his tears of blood will
run,
Albeit when threescore years and ten have
fled,
'Tis not a long farewell that he has said.

Ku Kuang
8th and 9th cent. A.D.

THE CHASTE WIFE'S REPLY

Knowing, fair sir, my matrimonial thrall,
 Two pearls thou sentest me, costly withal.
 And I, seeing that Love thy heart possessed,
 I wrapped them coldly in my silken vest.

For mine is a household of high degree,
 My husband captain in the King's army;
 And one with wit like thine should say,
 "The troth of wives is for ever and ay."

With thy two pearls I send thee back
two tears:
 Tears — that we did not meet in earlier
years!

Chang Chi
8th and 9th cent. A.D.

TASTE

The landscape which the poet loves
 is that of early May,
 When budding greenness half concealed
 enwraps each willow spray.
 That beautiful embroidery
 the days of summer yield,
 Appeals to every bumpkin
 who may take his walks afield.

Yang Chü-yüan
8th and 9th cent. A.D.

A LOST LOVE³⁷

Too late, alas!..... I came to find
 the lovely spring had fled.
 Yet must I not regret the days
 of youth that now are dead;
 For though the rosy buds of spring
 the cruel winds have laid,
 Behold the clustering fruit that hangs
 beneath the leafy shade!

Tu Mu

A.D. 803—852

THE OLD PLACE

A wilderness alone remains,
 all garden glories gone;
The river runs unheeded by,
 weeds grow unheeded on.
Dusk comes, the east wind blows, and birds
 pipe forth a mournful sound;
Petals, like nymphs from balconies,
 come tumbling to the ground.

Tu Mu

THE NIGHT COMES

'Tis evening, and in restless vein
 At the old mount I slacken rein:
 The glorious day
 Fades fast away
 And naught but twilight glooms remain!

Li Shang-yin

A.D. 813—858

SOUVENIRS

You ask when I'm coming: alas, not just
yet.....

How the rain filled the pools on that night
when we met!

Ah, when shall we ever snuff candles again,
And recall the glad hours of that evening
of rain?

Li Shang-yin

A SPRING FEAST

The paddy crops are waxing rich
 upon the Goose-Lake hill;
 The fowls have just now gone to roost,
 the grunting pigs are still;
 The mulberry casts a lengthening shade, —
 the festival is o'er,
 And tipsy revellers are helped
 each to his cottage door.

Chang Yen
9th cent. A.D.

ESCAPE

Confusion overwhelming me,
 as in a drunken dream,
 I note that spring has fled
 and wander off to hill and stream;
 With a friendly Buddhist priest I seek
 a respite from the strife
 And manifold anomalies
 which go to make up life.

Li Shê
9th cent. A.D.

ON HIGHWAYMEN³⁹

The rainy mist sweeps gently
 o'er the village by the stream,
When from the leafy forest glades
 the brigand daggers gleam.....
And yet there is no need to fear
 or step from out their way,
For more than half the world consists
 of bigger rogues than they!

Li Shê

A STORM

No rain, and lovely flowers bloom around;
Rain falls, and battered petals strew the
ground.

The bees and butterflies flit, one and all,
To seek the spring beyond my neighbour's
wall.

Wang Chia
9th cent. A.D.

SUMMER BEGINS

What time the bamboo casts a deeper shade,
When birds fill up the afternoon with song,
When catkins vanish, and when pear-blooms
fade, —

Then man is weary and the day is long.

*Chu Shu-chên*⁴⁰

9th cent. A.D.

LOVE'S SPRINGTIME

Twin blossoms blooming on
a single flower!.....
Then comes the jealous storm
with shattering sound.
Oh could we always feel the
Spring-God's power,
No petals scattered on the moss-grown
ground!

Chu Shu-chên

WHERE ARE THEY?

Alone I mount to the kiosk which stands
 on the river-bank, and sigh,
 While the moonbeams dance on the tops
 of the waves
 where the waters touch the sky;
 For the lovely scene is to last year's scene
 as like as like can be,
 All but the friends, the much-loved friends,
 who gazed at the moon with me.

Chao Chia
9th cent. A.D.

NEW YEAR'S EVE AT AN INN

Here in this inn no friend is nigh;
 We sit alone, my lamp and I,
 A thousand miles from love and smiles,
 To see another year pass by.

Ah me, that ever I was born!
 Is life worth living, thus forlorn?
 Youth, beauty, pass; and yet alas
 It will be spring tomorrow morn.

Tai Shu-lun
9th cent. A.D.

MUSING

At eve, along the river bank,
 The mist-crowned wavelets lure me on
 To think how all antiquity
 Has floated down the stream and gone!

Hsieh Jung
9th cent. A.D.

UT MELIUS

In youth I went to study TAO ⁴¹
 at its living fountain-head,
 And then lay tipsy half the day
 upon a gilded bed.
 "What oaf is this," the Master cried,
 "content with human lot?"
 And bade me to the world get back
 and call myself a Sot.
 But wherefore seek immortal life
 by means of wondrous pills?
 Noise is not in the market-place,
 nor quiet on the hills.
 The secret of perpetual youth
 is already known to me:
 Accept with philosophic calm
 whatever fate may be.

Ma Tsü-jan
9th cent. A.D.

MY NEIGHBOUR

When the Bear athwart was lying
And the night was just on dying,
And the moon was all but gone,
How my thoughts did ramble on!

Then a sound of music breaks
From a lute that some one wakes,
And I know that it is she,
The sweet maid next door to me.

And as the strains steal o'er me
Her moth-eyebrows⁴² rise before me,
And I feel a gentle thrill
That her fingers must be chill.

But doors and locks between us
So effectually screen us
That I hasten from the street
And in dreamland pray to meet.

Hsü An-chên

THE SEMPSTRESS

In silk and satin ne'er arrayed,
 My fate to be a lone old maid;
 No handsome bridegroom comes for me
 Dressed in the garb of poverty.
 I learned to sew with skill and grace,
 Though not to paint my brows and face,
 Yet I must ply my golden thread
 For other maids about to wed.

Ch'in T'ao-yü
8th or 9th cent. A.D.

THE TRAVELLER

The stream glides by, the flower fades,
 and neither feels a sting
 That thus they pass and bear away
 the glory of the spring.
 I dream myself once more at home,
 a thousand miles away;
 The night-jar wakes me with its cry
 ere yet 'tis early day.
 Long months have passed and no word comes
 to tell me of my own;
 With each New Year my scattered locks
 have white and whiter grown,
 Ah my dear home, if once within
 thy threshold I could be,
 The Five Lakes and their lovely scenes
 might all go hang for me.

Ts'ui T'u

8th or 9th cent. A.D.

GOLDEN SANDS

I would not have thee grudge those robes
 which gleam in rich array,
 But I would have thee grudge the hours
 of youth which glide away.
 Go pluck the blooming flower betimes,
 lest when thou com'st again
 Alas, upon the withered stem
 no blooming flowers remain!

*Tu Ch'in-niang*⁴³

8th or 9th cent. A.D.

WANDERJAHRE

Roused from the fumes of wine, I hear
the drum,
Midst thoughts of home, roll from the
distant tower,
While through the trees faint streaks of
daylight come,
And the spring passes in a pattering
shower.

The tired bird homeward wings its way
at last;
 Flowers fade and die beneath wild winds
oppressed.
 What have my wanderings earned these
ten years past?....
 My wayworn horse is sick of east and west.

Li Ch'ang-fu
8th or 9th cent. A.D.

MUSIC HATH CHARMS

Hark to the rapturous melody!

Her white arm o'er the lute she flings....

To break her lover's reverie

She strikes a discord on the strings.

Li Tuan

8th or 9th cent. A.D.

IN RETIREMENT

He envies none, the pure and proud
 ex-Minister of State;
 On the Western Lake he shuts himself
 within his bamboo gate.
 He needs no fan to cool his brow, for
 the south wind never lulls,
 While idly his official hat lies
 staring at the gulls.

Li Chia-yu

8th or 9th cent. A.D.

THE SPINSTER

Dim twilight throws a deeper shade
 across the window-screen;
 Alone within a gilded hall
 her tear-drops flow unseen.
 No sound the lonely court-yard stirs;
 the spring is all but through;
 Around the pear-blooms fade and fall.....
 and no one comes to woo.

Liu Fang-p'ing
8th or 9th cent. A.D.

THOUGHTS BY MOONLIGHT

Bright in the void the mirror moon⁴⁴
 appears,
 To the hushed music of the heavenly
 spheres,
 Full orb'd, while autumn wealth beneath
 her lies,
 On her eternal journey through the skies.
 Oh may we ever walk within the light
 Nor lose the true path in the eclipse of night!
 Oh let us mount where rays of glory beam
 And purge our grossness in the Silver
 Stream!⁴⁵

$$Chi\ P^c_o$$

8th or 9th cent. A.D.

CONTEMPLATION

When my court-yard by the placid moon
is lit,
When around me leaves come dropping
from the trees,
On the terrace steps, contemplative, I sit,
The swing-ropes swaying idly in the
breeze.

Han Wu
8th or 9th cent. A.D.

VIEW FROM AN OLD TOWER

The story of a thousand years

In one brief morning lies unrolled;
 Though other voices greet the ears,
 'Tis still the moonlit tower of old.

The heroes of those thousand years?

Alas! like running water, gone;
 Yet still the fever-blast one hears,
 And still the plum-rain patters on.

'Twas here ambition marched sublime —

An empty fame scarce marks the spot;
 Away!..... for I will never climb
 To see flowers bloom and man forgot.

Anon

8th and 9th cent. A.D.

HOMEWARD

No letters to the frontier come,
The winter softens into spring.....
I tremble as I draw near home,
And dare not ask what news you bring.

Li Pin
9th cent. A.D.

AN OATH

They swore the Huns should perish:
 they would die if needs they must....
 And now five thousand, sable-clad,
 have bit the Tartar dust.
 Along the river-bank their bones
 lie scattered where they may,
 But still their forms in dreams arise
 to fair ones far away.

Ch'ên Tao

9th and 10th cent. A.D.

TO AN ABSENT FAIR ONE

After parting, dreams possessed me
and I wandered you know where,
And we sat in the verandah
and you sang the sweet old air.
Then I woke, with no one near me
save the moon still shining on,
And lighting up dead petals
which like you have passed and gone.

Chang Pi
10th cent. A.D.

DISILLUSIONED

For ten long years I plodded through
the vale of lust and strife,
Then through my dreams there flashed a ray
of the old sweet peaceful life.....

No scarlet-tasselled hat of state
 can vie with soft repose;
Grand mansions do not taste the joys
 that the poor man's cabin knows.

I hate the threatening clash of arms
 when fierce retainers throng,
I loathe the drunkard's revels and
 the sound of fife and song;

But I love to seek a quiet nook, and
 some old volume bring
Where I can see the wild flowers bloom
 and hear the birds in spring.

Chên Po

10th cent. A.D.

'TWIXT HEAVEN AND EARTH⁴⁶

Upon this tall pagoda's peak

My hands can nigh the stars enclose;

I dare not raise my voice to speak,

For fear of startling God's repose.

Yang I

A.D. 974—1030

CONSOLATION

The balmy breath of spring must fail
 to reach that distant spot
 Where early wild-flowers do not bloom
 to cheer my exile's lot.
 See how the oranges still hang
 amid the clinging snow,
 And shoots and buds, benumbed by cold,
 around reluctant grow!
 At night your heart is with your home
 when you hear the wild goose cry,
 And your sadness ever deepens
 as the smiling months go by.
 Yet when you think of happy hours
 at Loyang in the past,
 Grieve not that spring is late, but joy
 that spring is yours at last.

Ou-yang Hsiu
A.D. 1007—1072

A STRUGGLE

Fair flowers from above in my goblet are
 shining,
And add by reflection an infinite zest;
Through two generations I've lived,
 unrepining,
While four mighty rulers have sunk to
 their rest.
My body in health has done nothing to
 spite me,
And sweet are the moments which pass
 o'er my head;
But now, with this wine and these flowers
 to delight me,
How shall I keep sober and get home
 to bed?

Shao Yung
A.D. 1011—1072

WAITING

'Tis the festival of Yellow Plums!

the rain unceasing pours,
And croaking bullfrogs hoarsely wake
the echoes out of doors.

I sit and wait for him in vain,
while midnight hours go by,
And push about the chessmen
till the lamp-wick sinks to die.

Ssü-ma Kuang

A.D. 1019—1086

ANNUAL WORSHIP AT TOMBS

The peach and plum trees smile with flowers
 this famous day of spring,
 And country graveyards round about
 with lamentations ring.
 Thunder has startled insect life
 and roused the gnats and bees,
 A gentle rain has urged the crops
 and soothed the flowers and trees....
 Perhaps on this side lie the bones
 of a wretch whom no one knows;
 On that, the sacred ashes
 of a patriot repose.
 But who across the centuries
 can hope to mark each spot
 Where fool or hero, joined in death,
 beneath the brambles rot?

Huang T'ing-chien

A.D. 1050—1110

A WHITE NIGHT

The incense-stick is burnt to ash,
 the water-clock is stilled,
 The midnight breeze blows sharply by
 and all around is chilled.
 Yet I am kept from slumber
 by the beauty of the spring :
 Sweet shapes of flowers across the blind
 the quivering moonbeams fling!

Wang An-shih

A.D. 1021—1086

INSOUCIANCE

I wander north, I wander south,
 I rest me where I please.....
 See how the river-banks are nipped
 beneath the autumn breeze!
 Yet what care I if autumn blasts
 the river-banks lay bare?
 The loss of hue to river-banks
 is the river-banks' affair.

Ch'êng Hao
A.D. 1032—1085

SPRING FANCIES

When clouds are thin, and the wind is light,
 about the noontide hour,
 I cross the stream, through willow paths
 with all around in flower.
 The world knows not my inmost thoughts
 which make me seem a fool;
 I'm taken for a truant boy
 escaped from tedious school.

Ch'êng Hao

SPRING NIGHTS

One half-hour of a night in spring
 is worth a thousand taels,
 When the clear sweet scent of flowers is felt
 and the moon her lustre pales;
 When mellowed sounds of song and flute
 are borne along the breeze,
 And through the stilly scene the swing
 sounds swishing from the trees.

Su Shih

A.D. 1036—1101

WHIGS AND TORIES⁴⁷

Thickly o'er the jasper terrace
 flower shadows play;
 In vain I call my garden boy
 to sweep them all away.
 They vanish when the sun sets
 in the west, but very soon
 They spring to giddy life again
 beneath the rising moon!

Su Shih

SWINGING⁴⁸

Two green silk ropes, with painted stand,
 from heights aerial swing,
 And there outside the house a maid
 disports herself in spring.
 Along the ground her blood-red skirts
 all swiftly swishing fly,
 As though to bear her off to be
 an angel in the sky.
 Strewed thick with fluttering almond-blooms
 the painted stand is seen;
 The embroidered ropes flit to and fro
 amid the willow green.
 Then when she stops and out she springs
 to stand with downcast eyes,
 You think she *is* some angel
 just now banished from the skies.

Hung Chüeh-fan
11th and 12th cent. A.D.

SUMMER

When ducklings seek the puddles, mostly
dry,
In the hot plum-time, with its changeful sky,
'Tis then in shady arbour we carouse,
And strip the golden loquat from the
boughs.

Tai Fu-ku

12th and 13th cent. A.D.

AT A PARK GATE

'Tis closed! — lest trampling footsteps mar
the glory of the green.

Time after time we knock and knock;
no janitor is seen.

Yet bolts and bars can't quite shut in
the spring-time's beauteous pall:

A pink-flowered almond-spray peeps out
athwart the envious wall!

Yeh Shih

A.D. 1150—1223

A MOUNTAIN BROOK

One draught for my poetic soul I take,
Unconscious river, ere thou glid'st away
To serve the orgies of the Western Lake,
And be no more the pure stream of today.

Lin Hung
12th cent. A.D.

THE THIRD MOON

In May flowers fade, and others come
 to bloom among the leaves,
 While all day long the nesting swallow
 flits around the eaves.
 The night-jar cries half through the night
 until the blood flows fast,
 Ah vainly hoping to recall the
 spring that now is past!

Wang Fêng-yüan
12th cent. A.D.

WORSHIP, AND AFTER ⁴⁹

The northern and the southern hills
 are one large burying-ground,
 And all is life and bustle there
 when the sacred day comes round.
 Burnt paper *cash*, like butterflies,
 fly fluttering far and wide,
 While mourners' robes with tears of blood
 a crimson hue are dyed.
 The sun sets, and the red fox crouches
 down beside the tomb;
 Night comes, and youths and maidens laugh
 where lamps light up the gloom.
 Let him, whose fortune brings him wine,
 get tipsy while he may;
 For no man, when the long night comes,
 can take one drop away!

Kao Chü-nien
12th cent. A.D.

AT HIS CLUB

Long past midnight the wife hears
 the goatsucker's cry,
 And rises to see that the
 silkworms are fed;
 Alas! there's the moon shining
 low in the sky,
 But her husband has not yet
 come back to his bed.

Hsieh Fang-tê
A.D. 1226—1289

AT HIS BOOKS

Shadows of pairing sparrows cross his
book,
 Of poplar catkins, dropping overhead
 The weary student from his window-nook
 Looks up to find that spring is long
since dead.

Yeh Li

13th cent. A.D.

AT A MOUNTAIN MONASTERY

I mounted when the cock had just begun,
And reached the convent ere the bells
were done.

A gentle zephyr whispered o'er the lawn;
Behind the wood the moon gave way to
dawn.

And in this pure sweet solitude I lay,
Stretching my limbs out to await the day,
No sound along the willow pathway dim
Save the soft echo of the bonzes' hymn.

Liu Chi

A.D. 1311—1375

OMNES EODEM

A centenarian 'mongst men
Is rare; and if one comes, what then?
The mightiest heroes of the past
Upon the hillside sleep at last.

Liu Chi

APOLOGIA

In vain hands bent on sacrifice
 or clasped in prayer we see;
 The ways of God are not exactly
 what those ways should be.
 The swindler and the ruffian
 lead pleasant lives enough,
 While judgments overtake the good
 and many a sharp rebuff.
 The swaggering bully stalks along
 as blithely as you please,
 While those who never miss their prayers
 are martyrs to disease.
 And if great God Almighty fails
 to keep the balance true,
 What can we hope that paltry
 mortal magistrates will do?

Hsieh Chin

A.D. 1369—1415

TO HER LOVER

The tide in the river beginning to rise,
Near the sad hour of parting, brings tears
to our eyes;
Alas that these furlongs of willow-strings
gay
Cannot hold fast the boat that will soon
be away!

*Chao Ts'ai-chi*⁵⁰
15th cent. A.D.

TO HIS COFFIN

An eternal home awaits me,
 shall I hesitate to go?
 Or struggle for a few more hours
 of fleeting life below?
 A home, wherein the clash of arms
 I can never hear again!
 And shall I strive to linger
 in this thorny world of pain?
 The breeze will soon blow cool o'er me,
 and the bright moon shine o'erhead,
 When blended with the gems of earth
 I lie in my last bed.
 My pen and ink shall go with me
 inside my funeral hearse,
 So that if I've leisure "over there"
 I may soothe my soul with verse.

Fang Shu-shao

15th cent. A.D.

TO GENERAL MAO

Southward, in all the panoply
 of cruel war arrayed,
 See, Our heroic general points
 and waves his glittering blade!
 Across the hills and streams
 the lizard-drums⁵¹ terrific roll,
 While glint of myriad banners
 flashes high from pole to pole.....
 Go, scion of the Unicorn,
 and prove thy heavenly birth,
 And crush to all eternity
 these insects of the earth;
 And when thou com'st, a conqueror,
 from those wild barbarian lands,
 We will unhitch thy war-cloak
 with Our own Imperial hands!

*Chu Hou-tsung*⁵²

A.D. 1507—1566

TO AN ABSENT LOVER

Your notes on paper rare to see,
Two flying joy-birds bear;
Be like the birds and fly to me,
Not like the paper rare!

*Chao Li-hua*⁵³
16th cent. A.D.

INWARD LIGHT

With wine and flowers we chase the hours,
In one eternal spring;
No moon, no light, to cheer the night,
Thyself that ray must bring.

P'u Sung-ling
Born A.D. 1622

AN AGNOSTIC

You ask me why I greet the priest
But not his God;
The God sits mute, the man at least
Returns my nod.

Anon
18th cent. A.D.

A SCOFFER

I've ever thought it passing odd
 How all men reverence some God,
 And wear their lives out for his sake
 And bow their heads until they ache.
 'Tis clear to me the Gods are made
 Of the same stuff as wind or shade.....
 Ah, if they came to every caller,
 I'd be the very loudest bawler!

Yüan Mei

A.D. 1715—1797

AN IMPROMPTU ⁵⁴

Though the torrent be swift, it can ne'er
 carry off
the moonbeam that lights up its bed;
Though the mountain be high, yet it
 cannot arrest
the fast-flying cloud overhead.

Lu Chu-ch'i
18th cent. A.D.

THE DIVINEST OF ALL THINGS

Man is indeed of heavenly birth,
Though seeming earthy of the earth;
The sky is but a denser pall
Of the thin air that covers all.
Just as this air, so is that sky;
Why call this low, and call that high?

The dewdrop sparkles in the cup —
Note how the eager flowers spring up;
Confine and crib them in a room,
They fade and find an early doom.
So 'tis that at our very feet
The earth and the empyrean meet.

The babe at birth points heavenward too,
Enveloped by the eternal blue;
As fishes in the water bide,
So heaven surrounds on every side;
Yet men sin on, because they say
Great God in heaven is far away.

Chao I

A.D. 1727—1814

ADVICE TO GIRLS⁵⁵

Trust not spring clouds, trust not to flowers:
 The butterfly is caught;
 Oh snatch no passing joy in hours
 Of pleasure wrongly sought!

A mien severe and eyes that freeze
 Become the future bride;
 No whispering underneath the trees
 Ere yet the knot be tied.

'Tis heaven on earth when woman wed
 Leans on her husband's arm;
 Beauty, like flowers, is quickly shed:
 Oh envy not its charm!

Chang Wên-t'ao
18th cent. A.D.

INTEGER VITÆ

Riches and rank — a morning dream in
spring;
 Fame — but an unsubstantial cloud above;
 Thy very body is not thine for ay;
Hate is the end of love.

Fix not a golden collar on thy neck;
Be not with chain of jade in service bound;
Pure heart and few desires: earth's dust
shake off —
And happiness is found.

Anon
18th cent. A.D.

OPPORTUNITY

The cup's in the hand,
 seize the hour ere 'tis^r fled;
How seldom in life
 is the moon overhead!

Anon

CHANCE

You may set with all care,
 but the flow'ret will fade,
While the chance-planted willow-twigg
 grows into shade.

Anon

A LAMENT

O ruthless Fate!

O cruel boon!

To meet so late

And part so soon.

Anon

NOTES

1. The *Odes* are some 300 of the old national ballads of China, collected and edited by Confucius, B.C. 551—479. They now form part of the Confucian Canon, and must be studied by all candidates for an official career. It is upon these *Odes* that the poetry of China has been based. The rhymes found therein are still the only recognised rhymes, although many of them are no longer rhymes to the ear. It is as though our writers of verse should rhyme "sweet" with "root," on the ground that Chaucer did so. Blank verse is unknown.

As to metre, the Chinese have used measures of different lengths, varying from one foot only to eleven feet and even more to the line. Each foot being a monosyllabic word there is no difficulty in seeing that the scansion is correct. The *Odes* are mostly written in lines of four feet; modern poetry always in lines of five or seven feet.

For poetical purposes all the characters in the language are ranged under *two* tones, as *flats* and *sharps*. These occupy certain fixed places, just as dactyls and spondees occupy fixed places in the construction of Latin verse. Thus in a stanza of the ordinary five-character length the following tonal arrangement must appear: —

Sharp sharp flat flat sharp
Flat flat sharp sharp flat
Flat flat flat sharp sharp
Sharp sharp sharp flat flat

2. This "woven stuff" is supposed to have been stamped pieces of linen, used as a circulating medium before the introduction of the bank-note.

3. The dove is very fond of mulberries, but is said to become intoxicated by them.

4. Son of the founder of the Han dynasty, to the throne of which he succeeded in B.C. 180.

5. Liu Ch^c succeeded his father as sixth Emperor of the great Han dynasty.

6. This poem records the loss of a favourite concubine.

7. This lady was for a long time the chief favourite of the tenth Emperor of the Han dynasty. When at length superseded, she forwarded to his Majesty a white silk fan upon which she had written these farewell lines.

8. A prince of the 6th cent. B.C., who studied the black art to such purpose that he rode up to heaven on the back of a crane. See "Home Longings," p. 57.

9. Drugs of immortality, coupled with alchemistic researches, occupied for many centuries the attention of Taoist philosophers.

10. The Chinese Hades.

11. A descendant of Confucius in the 20th generation.

12. These last four lines have been imitated by several poets, notably by Chang Chiu-ling who wrote as follows:

*Since my lord left — ah me, unhappy hour! —
The half-spun web hangs idly in my bower;
My heart is like the full moon, full of pains,
Save that 'tis always full and never wanes.*

13. Younger brother of the first Emperor of the Wei dynasty, to whom he became an object of suspicion. These lines were delivered impromptu in response to an order from his Majesty to compose a poem while taking seven steps.

14. A fabled ruler, said to dwell upon the K'un-lun range.

15. On one occasion the poet Hsieh Tao-hêng wrote the following lines: —

*A week in the spring to the exile appears
Like an absence from home of a couple of years.*

Thereupon a "southerner" who was present sneered and cried out "That is shallow stuff!" immediately producing the couplet in the text.

16. This term includes the rulers under the Golden Age, Confucius, Mencius, and any other divinely-inspired teacher of the cardinal virtues.

17. The Yellow-Crane Kiosque still stands on the banks of the Yang-tze, the River *par excellence*, near its junction with the Han river at Wu-ch'ang Fu in Hupeh. See note 8. Li Po at one time thought of writing a poem on this theme, but he gave up the idea so soon as he had read the lines by Ts'ui Hao.

18. An impromptu, at the age of ten.

19. See notes 8 and 17.

20. A.D. 320—385. On one occasion, when roaming in disguise at the spot mentioned in the text, he fell in with the poet Yüan Hung, and became thereafter his attached friend and patron.

21. Chinese fable says that the moon is inhabited by a huge toad which occasionally swallows it; hence eclipses.

Also that there are groves of cassias in the moon, and a hare visible to the naked eye, engaged in preparing the drug of immortality. The allusion to the "suns" refers to a story of the legendary archer, Hou I, who when a number of false suns appeared in the sky, to the great detriment of the crops, shot at and destroyed them with his arrows.

22. One fine evening, the Emperor Ming Huang who was enjoying himself with his favourite lady in the palace grounds, called for Li Po to commemorate the scene in verse. After some delay the poet arrived, supported between two eunuchs. "Please your Majesty," he said, "I have been drinking with the Prince and he has made me drunk, but I will do my best." Thereupon two of the ladies of the harem held up in front of him a pink silk screen, and in a very short time he had thrown off no less than ten eight-line stanzas, of which the one in the text is a specimen.

23. The poet, having incurred the displeasure of the famous favourite, Yang Kuei-fei, was forced to go into exile.

24. After penning these lines on board a pleasure-boat at night, the poet is said to have been drowned by falling over the side in a drunken effort to embrace the reflection of the moon.

25. A famous poet of the 2nd cent. B.C. He ran away with a beautiful widow and was driven to keep a tavern, until the father-in-law relented. Tu Fu hints that he would like himself to meet a similar partner.

26. Meaning that he is now doubtful whether he should not at once embrace a hermit's life.

27. A specimen of political allegory. The "lonely plant" refers to a virtuous statesman for whom the time is out of joint. The "mango-bird" is a worthless politician in power. The "ferry-boat" is the Ship of State.

28. A state of mental abstraction, by recourse to which the Buddhist gradually shakes off all desire for sublunary existence. In every monastery there is a building specially set apart for this purpose, and there the priests may be seen sitting for hours together with their eyes closed.

29. This poem refers to the great general Han Hsin of the 2nd cent. B.C., who in his poverty-stricken days was saved from starving by a kindly washerwoman. Later on he remembered and provided for his benefactress. The "grief-bird" is the goatsucker or nightjar. The "nobleman" was an epithet used by the washerwoman to Han Hsin, as though by a presentiment of his future greatness.

30. In experience of the ups and downs of life.

31. Confucius.

32. The Chinese prefer hillsides for their burying-grounds.

33. One of the gold hairpins delicately inlaid with kingfisher feathers, much worn by Chinese ladies.

34. Having nothing better to do. The dragon-fly strikes a note of loneliness.

35. She hears from a distance the sound of revels in which she once joined as chief favourite.

36. Water-clocks were known to the Chinese at a very early period, and are still to be seen in China.

37. When the poet was ordered to a distant post, he said to his fiancée, "Within ten years I shall be Governor. If I do not return within that time, marry whomsoever you please." He came back at the end of fourteen years to find her married and the mother of three children.

38. Referring to two stars which are separated by the Milky Way, except on the 7th night of the 7th moon in

each year, when magpies form a bridge for the Damsel to pass over to her lover.

39. This famous poet having been caught by brigands was ordered to give a specimen of his art. The impromptu in the text earned his immediate release.

40. A poetess.

41. *Tao* means "The Way" and refers originally to the teaching of the philosopher Lao Tzŭ who flourished some seven centuries B.C. It here signifies the arts of prolonging life, of transmutation of metals, etc., which came to be associated with Lao Tzŭ's doctrines.

42. Resembling the delicately curved eye-markings of the silkworm moth.

43. A poetess.

44. Referring to the polished discs of metal anciently used as mirrors by the Chinese.

45. The Milky Way.

46. The story runs that as a child the poet was unable to speak, until one day, being carried up to the top of a pagoda, he burst out with the lines in the text.

47. Allegorical. The "flower shadows" stand for evil politicians who held their own against the brooms of virtuous statesmen, but disappeared at the death of their patron, the Emperor Shên Tsung, in 1086, to reappear upon the death of his successor.

48. Chinese girls stand upon the seat of the swing.

49. Referring to the annual spring worship at the tombs of ancestors. See also p. 166.

50. A poetess-Anonyma.

51. Covered with lizard-skin.

52. Eleventh Emperor of the Ming dynasty. General Mao crushed a serious revolt in Annam, 1539—1541, but later on fell into disfavour and was cashiered.

53. A poetess-Anonyma. Chinese note-paper is covered with pictures of various designs, such as the birds in the text.

54. These lines were uttered by the poet, when lying tipsy in the high road, to the Prefect who happened to be passing and who was rating him for unseemly behaviour. "You are the Prefect," he cried, "that is your business; I am drunk, that is my business."

55. Written after perusing the work on the duties of women by Pan Chao, the famous female historian of the 1st cent. A.D.

INDEX TO POETS

- Chang Chi 張籍 127
Chang Chiu-ling 張九齡 48
Chang Pi 張泌 160
Chang Wei 張謂 104
Chang Wên-t'ao 張問陶 193
Chang Yen 張演 135
Ch'ang Chien 常建 92
Chao Chia 趙嘏 141
Chao I 趙翼 191
Chao Li-hua 趙麗華 186
Chao Ts'ai-chi 趙彩姬 183
Ch'ên Po 陳搏 161
Ch'ên T'ao 陳陶 159
Ch'ên Tzŭ-ang 陳子昂 43
Ch'êng Hao 程顥 168

- Chi P'ò 季朴 155
- Chia Chih 賈至 95
- Chiang Yen 江淹 38
- Ch'ín T'ao-yü 秦韜玉 148
- Chu Ch'ing-yü 朱慶餘 93
- Chu Hou-tsung 朱厚燾 185
- Chu Shu-chên 朱淑貞 139
- Ch'üan Tê-yü 權德輿 109
- Fang Shu-shao 方叔邵 184
- Fu Mi 傅牟 28
- Han Wu 韓渥 156
- Han Yü 韓愈 110
- Ho Chih-chang 賀知章 46
- Hsiao Yen 蕭衍 40
- Hsieh Chin 解縉 182
- Hsieh Fang-tê 謝枋得 178
- Hsieh Jung 薛瑩 144
- Hsü An-chên 徐安貞 146
- Hsü Kan 徐幹 25
- Huang-fu Jen 皇甫冉 143

- Huang T'ing-chien 黃庭堅 166
 Hung Chüeh-fan 洪覺範 172
 Ka Chia-yün 蓋嘉運 103
 Kao Chü-nien 高菊礪 177
 Kêng Wei 耿漳 101
 Ku K'uang 顧況 126
 K'ung Jung 孔融 23
 Li Ch'ang-fu 李昌符 151
 Li Chia-yu 李嘉祐 153
 Li Ho 李賀 120
 Li I 李益 125
 Li Pin 李頻 158
 Li Po 李白 58
 Li Shang-yin 李商隱 133
 Li Shê 李涉 136
 Li Shih-chih 李適之 52
 Li Tuan 李端 152
 Lin Hung 林洪 175
 Liu Ch'ang-ch'ing 劉長卿 102
 Liu Ch'ê 劉徹 17

- Liu Chi 劉基 180
- Liu Fang-p'ing 劉方平 154
- Liu Hêng 劉恒 15
- Liu Yü-hsi 劉禹錫 121
- Lu Chu-ch'i 陸竹溪 190
- Ma Tzŭ-jan 馬自然 145
- Mei Shêng 枚乘 13
- Mêng Hao-jan 孟浩然 49
- Odes, The 詩經 1
- Ou-yang Hsiu 歐陽修 163
- Pan, The Lady 班婕妤 19
- Pao Chao 鮑照 36
- Po Chü-i 白居易 123
- P'ü Sung-ling 蒲松齡 187
- Shao Yung 邵雍 164
- Ssü-k'ung Shu 司空曙 94
- Ssü-ma Kuang 司馬光 165
- Su Shih 蘇軾 170
- Sung Chih-wên 宋之問 47
- Sung Yü 宋玉 11

- Tai Fu-ku 戴復古 173
- Tai Shu-lun 戴叔倫 142
- T'ao Ch'ien 陶潛 32
- Ts'ao Chih 曹植 27
- Ts'ên Ts'an 岑參 99
- Tsu Yung 祖詠 107
- Ts'ui Hao 崔顥 57
- Ts'ui Hu 崔護 108
- Ts'ui T'ü 崔塗 149
- Tu Ch'iu-niang 杜秋娘 150
- Tu Fu 杜甫 80
- Tu Mu 杜牧 129
- Wang An-shih 王安石 167
- Wang Ch'ang-ling 王昌齡 105
- Wang Chi 王績 41
- Wang Chia 王駕 138
- Wang Fêng-yüan 王逢原 176
- Wang Han 王翰 100
- Wang Po 王勃 42
- Wang Wei 王維 53

- Wei Ying-wu 韋應物 96
 Yang Chü-yüan 楊巨源 128
 Yang I 楊億 162
 Yeh Li 葉李 179
 Yeh Shih 葉適 174
 Yüan Chên 元稹 124
 Yüan Mei 袁枚 189

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